

Wycombe Wanderers 1, Hitchin Town 1

WYCOMBE Wanderers frittered away two more points in their bid to finish as Isthmian League runners-up when held to a 1-1 draw on Monday by a Hitchin side reduced to ten men when their mid-field man Kevin Mulkern was sent off 25 minutes from the end, writes Michael Knox.

Mulkern, who used to play for Chesham United, was first booked in the 55th minute for delaying to take a throw-in. This followed an earlier warning by referee Mr Day to left back Steve Gear for the same offence.

Fifteen minutes later Mulkern brought down Tony Horseman from behind. Mr Day at first showed the yellow card again until recognising who it was, whereupon he changed the colour to red and the disconsolate Mulkern walked off.

The score at the time was 1-1, but even against a ten-man outfit, Wycombe were unable to score again. Showing a lack of ideas, they produced only two clear cut chances after that, both of which were wasted by Dylan Evans.

Blues reserve strength is so thin these days that the veteran Roger Day became the obvious replacement for Graham Mackenzie, who is suffering from influenza. The other mid-field reserve, Howard Kennedy, was on a school trip in Minehead.

Day, in his time, was one of the great Isthmian League players but he is now well past his peak. It was sad to see such a past star ambling around the field and being jeered at when in possession.

Wycombe's problems increased 11 minutes from time when John Priestley limped off with an injured knee. So manager John Reardon must be hoping for a rapid improvement in the injury situation before Thursday's visit to Leatherhead.

On the credit side, it was nice to see Bobby Davies returning to the left back spot after a recent

family bereavement. The defence looked much sounder and he also showed more ideas than many of his colleagues when on the attack.

NEW BLOOD NEEDED

The time must surely come when Wanderers introduce a little fresh blood into their squad. Hitchin for instance, fielded the young Terry Scott who was playing at Chalfont St Peter this time last year.

He may not be a great player yet but he is learning and could be a star in a couple of years time. It was he who first tested John Maskell with a fine shot after eight minutes.

Hitchin had the better of the game in the first half hour, at the end of which they took the lead. An overhead kick by Jose Whishaw put Mulkern in the clear. His first shot was well parried by Maskell but the ball fell to the feet of Peter Watson who blasted it into the back of an empty net.

This goal shook Wycombe out of their earlier lethargy and they went close to equalising immediately. Evans saw a fine shot on the turn smack into a defender, while Keith Mead nearly took advantage of a defensive mistake to head just wide.

The equaliser eventually came four minutes into the second half. Mick Holifield sent an in-swinging cross to the far post where deputy goalkeeper Charlie Lacey dropped the ball into the path of Evans who made no mistake from close range.

Evans had two more opportunities to clinch victory after Mulkern had been sent off. First

he volleyed a left foot shot 15 yards wide from five yards out and then missed the target again with a clear header after a brilliant run by Birdseye on the right.

Incidentally Birdseye was then playing in mid-field following the departure of the injured Priestley. He certainly showed more ideas in that position than some of his colleagues and could well find himself playing there if the injury situation does not soon improve — or even if it does!

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, R. Davies, K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Day, J. Priestley (sub R. Strong 79 mins), M. Holifield, D. Harris, D. Evans, A. Horseman.

HITCHIN: C. Lacey; S. Norris, S. Gear, R. Brimson, W. Baldry, K. Mulkern, K. Hammond, P. Fairclough, J. Whishaw, T. Scott, P. Watson. Sub: M. Grafton (not used).

Referee: F. Day (Walthamstow).

Half-time 0-1. Scorers: Wycombe — Evans (49 mins), Hitchin — Watson (29).

ISTHMIAN LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION (Up to 17/4/78)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Enfield	37	30	5	2	84	25	95
Dagenham	39	22	7	10	75	52	73
Wycombe W	38	21	6	11	61	37	69
Tooting	37	19	8	10	55	42	65
Croydon	39	17	9	13	59	49	60
Hitchin T	37	17	9	11	61	51	60
Sutton U	35	17	8	10	56	48	59
Hayes	40	15	11	14	46	49	56
Carshalton	39	14	11	14	59	60	53
Barking	38	15	6	17	67	59	51
Hendon	38	15	6	17	53	50	51
Leatherhead	31	14	8	9	50	34	50
Boreham Wd	38	14	8	16	46	60	50
Walthamstow	33	13	10	10	53	50	49
Staines T	40	11	13	16	45	58	46
Woking	37	12	9	16	53	55	45
Slough T	37	13	6	18	44	59	45
Tilbury	38	10	11	17	48	61	41
Kingstonian	40	7	13	20	40	61	34
Leytonstone	40	6	14	20	42	70	32
Southall	39	5	14	20	41	71	29
Stortford	38	7	8	23	33	70	29